

is only a very short space between the detached anterior portion of the dorsal rays and the rest of the fin.

The total length of this specimen restored would be about six feet, the width about one inch, and the height seven inches without the fin. Colour uniform, of burnished silver, no markings or spots on the body, fin membranes opalescent, longest rays about a-quarter of the height of the body.

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NOTES ON SOME OF THE HABITS AND CUSTOMS OF AUSTRALIAN  
NATIVES IN QUEENSLAND.

BY DR. J. C. COX, F.L.S.

The Natives of Australia are so rapidly disappearing, owing to their altered habits and the evil influences which accompany civilization, and so little is recorded of those habits, that any authenticated facts regarding them are worthy of note; I crave no apology therefore for offering the few brief notes to this Society which I have made regarding some of the tribes to the North of Queensland.

It has been known for a considerable time that the male members of some of the Native tribes which inhabit the North-west part of Australia, and a few tribes also which inhabit that part of the Continent to the North-west of Fort Bourke have an operation performed on their genital organs when about ten or twelve years of age, the object of which it is difficult to surmise. The operation which I refer to is that of having their urethras slit up from the posterior part of the meatus at the point of the glans along the median line of the under surface of the penis as far back as the scrotum. My friend Mr. Sydney Brown was the first to call my attention to this curious custom, having observed it amongst the tribes North-west of Fort Bourke, who gather and use the narcotic plant known as *Pitchurie*; before being able to make observations for himself, he had heard of this practice, but

it was described to him as a process of circumcision ; he soon, however, convinced himself when he had an opportunity, that such was not the case, but that it consisted of the more formidable operation mentioned. Mr. Brown is fully of opinion that amongst the tribes he visited certain members of them were left unoperated on. Since being informed of this custom by Mr. Brown, I have had sent to me a very interesting pamphlet written by Dr. Richardson, who gives a minute account of this operation as practised by the Natives in North-west Australia, making them in reality Hypospodiaes.

Mr. Henry Bloomfield, while residing at Fort Constantine Station on the Cloncurry River, District of Bourke, 270 miles south of Normanton on the Gulf of Carpentaria, and about 570 miles west of Townsville, observed that many of the Natives residing there had been subjected to an operation of the same kind, but that the custom was not at all universal. The Natives however, which inhabit the heads of the Cloncurry have all been subjected to this operation, and the same was found to be universal amongst the natives which inhabit the MacKinlay Range and the watershed, from thence west, except the tribes known as the Calcadoon, Edgiree, Rinooringoo, and Yallunga, and possibly others. Mr. Bloomfield has no doubt that every one of the males of these tribes have had this operation performed on them, and that none of them have been left intact, as is generally affirmed by persons who have been out in the districts where these tribes reside—the term Bucks has been applied to those of the males of these tribes who are supposed to have been left perfect—from information obtained by personal inquiry Mr. Bloomfield made himself sure that any Natives amongst these tribes not operated on were only visitors from other tribes from a distance, residing with them only temporarily. This operation of splitting up the urethra is done with a sharp flint, about the age of puberty or at any rate before the young men of the tribes are permitted to take gins. It was supposed by many who had

seen them, that these Natives had been circumcised, but such is not the case, the prepuce being cut shrinks back as the wound heals by cicatrization along the slit up urethra. It is asserted by some of the white settlers of this district that many of the gins undergo some operation to prevent them bearing children, but as far as Mr. Bloomfield's observations went, he saw nothing to corroborate this supposition; they undergo however an operation by which the nipples are cut off the breasts, with what object it is difficult to conjecture, but there seems good reason to believe that the children born from such mothers are all given up for food to the tribe; all these tribes were found to be undoubted cannibals, possibly from necessity, as there is great difficulty in their being able to procure much flesh of any kind, opossums and kangaroo are scarce; their principal food being rats, lizards, snakes, birds, mussels, and roots. The Calcadoon and Mithure tribes use spears with and without barbs, made of hard wood, but not so stout as spears found with other Natives, and they are thrown with a Womera; they use also a Boomerang of a short kind with equally bent ends, but their principal way of capturing the stronger kinds of game is by very long nets, made from thick cord twisted by hand out of the bark of a shrub; the seed of the grass is collected by thrashing, and it is then rubbed into a flour on a stone and made into cakes. The stone tomahawk and flint knife are the only cutting implements found amongst them. It is an interesting fact that all these tribes were found in possession of what is known as *Pitchurie* as it is not known to grow in the district, but they did not smoke it, as Mr. Brown observed them on the North-west of Fort Bourke, but chew it alone, a quid of it was passed round from one to another to chew, and when tired of it it is plastered behind the ears.

The gins of the Calcadoon tribe had the two front teeth always knocked out, and both men and women have their noses perforated and are tattooed—they make their dilly bags generally of human hair. They use snares of a peculiar kind for the capture of the

wild turkey, these snares are about eighteen inches long, one end stiff and strong, made by twisting the feathers from the wing of the turkey, the other end is limp and has a loop made of human hair, these snares are tied on to the end of a spear and held just above the grass by a native who creeps up to his prey disguised by fresh boughs tied round his head, and the bird being naturally a stupid, inquisitive one comes to examine this object and permits itself to be snared.

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## NOTES AND EXHIBITS.

Dr. Cox stated that he had been requested by Mr. Henry Bloomfield to have the following facts published in regard to a report which had gone the rounds of the daily papers in reference to a statement said to have been made by Mr. Skuthorpe, to the effect that half-caste natives had been seen by him amongst the tribes of natives on the Herbert River, in the North of Queensland. He thought he could do better than communicate those facts through this Society. Mr. Bloomfield has been residing for many months on the Port Constane Station, on the Cloneurry River, district of Bourke, Queensland, about 270 miles south of Normanton, on the Gulf of Carpentaria, and about 570 miles west of Townsville. He received the following information from Mr. Thomas Cribb, who was with Mr. H. Skuthorpe on the Herbert River five years ago next January, and was with him all the time Mr. Skuthorpe was out there. Mr. Cribb states that Mr. Skuthorpe had gone inside where Mr. Kirwin perished in endeavouring to get to the Diamantina, and that there is not the slightest foundation for the statement that half-caste natives had been seen by them amongst the tribes of the Herbert. No mention was ever made to Mr. Cribb of the presence of these half-castes during the whole time they resided together on the Herbert. The names of the three tribes are Edgiroe, Wanditta, and Yalulunga. All these tribes are said to be circumcised, but